

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 COME-00 EB-08

LAB-04 SIL-01 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 DHA-02

CU-02 MCT-01 AID-05 PC-01 OPR-02 /076 W

-----262358 063894 /70

O R 262200Z FEB 77 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3485

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAN SALVADOR 0900

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, PGOV, ES

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION PROTEST APPEARS OVER

REF: SAN SALVADOR 0894

1. SUMMARY. THE OPPOSITION OCCUPATION OF THE CITY'S PRINCIPAL PLAZA CONTINUES. AS OF LATE FRIDAY, THE DEMONSTRATION APPEARED TO BE BUILDING STEAM AS EVIDENCED BY AN ENTHUSIASTIC CROWD IN EXCESS OF 50 THOUSAND PEOPLE. DESPITE THIS APPEARANCE OF GROWING STRENGTH, COL. CLARAMOUNT DECIDED LATE FRIDAY EVENING TO BREAK UP THE RALLY AT NOON SATURDAY. BELIEVING THAT THE GOES MIGHT USE FORCE BEFORE THEN TO DISLODGE THE CROWD, AND FEARING THE POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE AND LOSS OF LIFE, CLARAMOUNT ASKED THE EMBASSY TO INFORM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DECISION TO LEAVE VOLUNTARILY. THE WORD WAR PASSED, AND IT APPEARED BOTH SIDES WANTED TO AVOID BLOOD SPILLING. THE AGREEMENT MIGHT HAVE BROKEN DOWN, BUT IT IS EVIDENT THAT THE UNO LEADERSHIP HAS DECIDED TO CALL IT QUITS. GIVEN THE DEMONSTRATIONS UNEXPECTED STRENGTH, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE UNO DECISION COMES AS SOMETHING OF A SURPRISE.  
END SUMMARY.

2. REFTEL DESCRIBED THE TENSION AND POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE IN SAN SALVADOR CAUSED BY THE MOUNTING STEAM BEHIND THE UNO COALITION'S PROTEST DEMONSTRATION AGAINST GOES' MANIPULATION OF THE FEBRUARY 20 ELECTION, AS THE HOURS OF FRIDAY PASSED, THE APPEAR-

ANCE OF A MOUNTING CHALLENGE AND THE INEVITABILITY OF CONFRONTATION HELD.

3. AS BEST EVIDENCE WAS THE COURSE OF EVENTS IN THE PLAZA LIBERTAD, WHERE UNO HELD THE KEY TO THE CITY'S TRANSPORTATION AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES, AND GAVE EVERY INDICATION OF PLANNING TO MAINTAIN THE OCCUPATION UNTIL EITHER THE GOVERNMENT ANNULLED THE ELECTION OR TOOK STRONG POLICE ACTION. BY SIX PM FRIDAY THE CROWD IN THE PLAZA HAD RETURNED TO THE PREVIOUS EVENING'S SIZE, SOMETHING ON THE ORDER OF 40-50 THOUSAND PEOPLE. THE LEADERS ANNOUNCED A MARCH THROUGH THE DOWNTOWN STREETS (FYI PDC SPOKESMEN LATER DESCRIBED THE MOTIVE OF THE MARCH AS "GIVING THE CROWD SOMETHING TO DO", I.E., NOT HAVING A DESTINATION OR PURPOSE BEYOND THE WALK ITSELF.). TWO ASSOCIATED PRESS REPORTERS COVERING THE STORY LATER EXPRESSED AMAZEMENT AT THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE CROWD, AND THE SNOWBALL EFFECT AS PASSERSBY CHEERED THE MARCHERS AND JOINED IN. THE REPORTERS SENSED THAT THE CROWD WAS READY FOR ANYTHING, AND NOTICED SOME OF THE YOUNGER ONES GRABBING STICKS AND ROCKS. BY THE TIME THE PARADE RETURNED TO THE PLAZA, BIGGER THAN WHEN IT LEFT, THE CROWD THAT HAD STAYED BEHIND HAD GROWN ALSO. THE APERS ESTIMATE BETWEEN 60-70 THOUSAND PEOPLE, AND ENORMOUS CROWD BY SALVADORAN STANDARDS.

4. AT EIGHT PM PRESIDENT MOLINA ADDRESSED THE COUNTRY ON NATIONWIDE RADIO-TV. HIS MESSAGE, IN SIMPLE TERMS, WAS THAT THE ELECTIONS ARE OFFICIALLY OVER AND THAT THE LOSERS HAD BETTER RETURN TO THEIR JOBS AND OTHER PURSUITS. HE CLAIMED THE ROMERO-ASTACIO TICKET HAD WON BY MORE VOTES (417 THOUSAND) THAN THE OPPOSITION RECEIVED IN TOTAL (395 THOUSAND). THIS FACT CONFIDENTIAL

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ALONE, THE PRESIDENT STATED, MADE ALL CLAIMS OF FRAUD AND MANIPULATION LUDICROUS. HE PROMISED HE WOULD NOT PERMIT A SMALL NUMBER OF FRUSTRATED, POWER-MAD SORE LOSERS SUBVERT THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE.

5. A POLOFF VISITED THE PLAZA AT 11 PM. THE SPEECHES DRONED ON, WITH THE ACTIVE AUDIENCE DOWN TO 1500 LISTENERS. BEHIND THEM, ANOTHER THOUSAND, MANY WOMEN AND CHILDREN, HAD BEDDED DOWN IN THE PLAZA AND THE SURROUNDING STREETS. THE YOUTHS MANNING THE BARRICADES WERE NERVOUS, AND CLAIMED TO HAVE SEEN HEAVILY ARMED POLICE AND ARMORED CARS OUT IN THE DARK.

6. WHEN THE POLOFF RETURNED TO HIS HOME, HE RECEIVED A CALL FROM A PDC (CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY) LEADER WHO REQUESTED AN URGENT MEETING. RICARDO RAMIREZ RAUDA (PDC SEC GEN) AND MAURICIO ALBERGUE (LEGAL ADVISOR AND STRATEGIST) APPEARED, SAYING THEY HAD BEEN SNEAKED BY CLARAMOUNT. UNO HAD INFORMATION, THEY CLAIMED, THAT THE NATIONAL GUARD WAS UNDER ORDERS TO CLEAR THE PLAZA DURING THE NIGHT. THEY SAID THEY WERE CERTAIN THE RESULT WOULD BE PANIC, AND PROBAB-

LYDEATH. THEY STATED THAT UNO ALREADY HAD DECIDED TO VACATE THE PLAZA THE FOLLOWING DAY BY NOON, AND REQUESTED THAT THIS INFORMATION BE PASSED TO THE GOVERNMENT IN AN EFFORT TO HAVE THE SECURITY SERVICES CALLED OFF, TO AVERT BLOODSHED. CLARAMOUNT OFFERED THE GOES HIS PROMISE THAT THE PLAZA WOULD BE PEACEFULLY CLEARED THE NEXT DAY. RAMIREZ AND ALBERGUE WERE TAKEN TO THE RESIDENCE AND REPEATED THE REQUEST TO THE AMDASFADOR. IN AN EFFORT TO AVERT WHAT APPEARED TO BE THE BEGINNINGS OF A LIFE ENDANGERING SITUATION, INCLUDING MANY WOMEN AND CHILDREN, THE AMBASSADOR ASKED DATT TO TRY AND CONTACT THE MINDEF, AND/OR PRESIDENT, TO PASS ON CLARAMOUNT'S MESSAGE.

7. THE MINDEF, RAISED FROM HIS BED, CAME BACK WITH THE MESSAGE THAT: (1) THE PRESIDENT WAS ASLEEP; (2) HE KNEW NOTHING OF AN ORDER TO VACATE THE PLAZA; (3) HE WOULD CHECK THE FIRST THING IN THE MORNING WITH THE PRESIDNET AND PASS ON THE PROFFERED UNO DEAL. EARLY SATURDAY MORNING, DATT SPOKE TO ROMERO WHO SAID CONFIDENTIAL

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HE WOULD COUNSEL NO GOVERNMENT ACTION AGAINST THE PLAZA, AT LEAST UNTIL UNO HAD A CHANCE TO MORE OUT PEACEFULLY. ROMERO'S WORD WAS PASSED TO RAMIREZ. THE LATTER THANKED THE EMBASSY FOR ITS HELP AND SAID HE WOULD GET ROMERO'S WORDS TO CLARAMOUNT.

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 COME-00 EB-08  
LAB-04 SIL-01 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 DHA-02  
CU-02 MCT-01 AID-05 PC-01 OPR-02 /076 W  
-----270000 063891 /70

O R 262200Z FEB 77 ZFF-4  
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3486  
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE  
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA  
USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAN SALVADOR 0900

8. AT 1130 HOURS SATURDAY, HALF AN HOUR BEFORE THE UNO PLANNED TO ABANDON THE PLAZA, AN INCIDENT OCCURRED AT ONE OF THE BARRICADES WHICH MIGHT REPEAT MIGHT DISRUPT THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES. RAMIREZ CALLED FROM THE SCENE TO REPORT (LATER CONFIRMED BY THE AP TEAM) THAT A POLICE PATROL, SOME DOZEN MEN LED BY A CORONEL, APPROACHED ONE OF THE BARRICADES AND TOLD THE SENTINELS TO FALL BACK TO THE PLAZA. THE PATROL, WITH A LARGE CROWD OF SPECTATORS BEHIND IT AND THE 'ENEMY' IN FRONT, WAS NERVOUS. WHEN THE YOUTHS BEHIND THE BARRICADES TAUNTED THE POLICE, AND MOVED FORWARD, THE POLICE FIRED IN THE AIR. A CLASH RESULTED, AND FOUR OF THE DEMONSTRATORS WERE ARRESTED. THE PATROL FELL BACK, AND THERE HAS BEEN NO FURTHER TROUBLE. THE UNO LEADERSHIP DECIDED, IN THE FACE OF WHAT IT VIEWS AS BAD FAITH ON THE GOES PART, TO PROLONG ITS OCCUPATION OF THE PLAZA. AS OF 1630 HOURS, THE UNO MAINTAINS CONTROL OF THE SQUARE.

9. FROM DISCUSSIONS WITH RAMIREZ AND ALBERQUE WHILE WAITING FOR THE RESULTS OF DATT'S EFFORTS, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE UNO IS CONFIDENTIAL

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ABANDONING ITS PROTEST EFFORTS. THEY SAID THEY HAD DECIDED BEFORE RECEIVING EVIDENCE OF GOES INTENTION TO USE FORCE. THE UNO PLANS TO REVERT TO THE LEGAL SYSTEM TO ANNUL THE ELECTION. THEY ADMITTED THIS WAS MERELY A PRO FORMA STEP, FOR WHICH THEY HELD NO EXPECTATIONS. THE CHALLENGE, THE ELECTION HAPPENING HAS ENDED, THEY SAID.

10. COMMENT - THE SUDDENNESS, AND THE FINALITY, OF THE UNO DECISION TO YIELD THE FIELD COMES AS A SURPRISE TO THE EMBASSY. AS DESCRIBED IN PARA 2 AND REFTEL, THE UNO EFFORT SEEMED TO BE BUILDING UNEXPECTED STEAM. TO PUT OVER 50 THOUSAND ENTHUSIASTIC DEMONSTRATORS IN THE STREET AT 7 PM, TO PARALYZE THE CENTER OF THE CITY FOR THREE DAYS, AND THEN TO ABANDON THE EFFORT FIVE HOURS LATER MAKES LITTLE SENSE. THE ONLY EXPLANATION IS THAT THE UNO LEADERSHIP NEVER CONTEMPLATED, OR WANTED, VIOLENCE. WE ARE CERTAIN THAT CLARAMOUNT, AND THE PDC CONTINGENT OF THE UNO LEADERSHIP, DOES NOT WANT THE SITUATION TO DETERIORATE INTO VIOLENCE AND CHAOS. OTHERS WHO HAVE JOINED THEM, WITH MOTIVES OF THEIR OWN, MIGHT NOT BE SO READY TO CONCEDE DEFEAT. WE ASSUME CLARAMOUNT AND HIS ADVISORS, SENSING THE GOVERNMENT'S WILLINGNESS TO USE FORCE AND THE CROWD'S INCREASING BELIGERENCE, DECIDED THAT IT WAS USELESS TO TAKE ON THE GOVERNMENT ARMED FORCES WITH KIDS AND STICKS. LOZANO

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## Message Attributes

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